



Baltimore's Career Pathways Initiative for Teachers

Baltimore's career pathways initiative offers an example of how local educational agencies and unions can work together to change existing paradigms of teacher advancement and create new leadership opportunities for educators. As a result of a three-year contract ratified in 2010 by the Baltimore City Public Schools and the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU), the school system has developed four differentiated career pathways to encourage teacher leadership and provide teachers with a career ladder and financial rewards for professional effectiveness. The new four-tiered system replaces Baltimore's automatic step increases and allows teachers to increase their salaries more quickly than the previous seniority-based system. For example, teachers selected by their peers for the third pathway—"Model Pathway"—receive a \$15,000–\$20,000 increase in pay and subsequent increases in salary, depending on performance.

According to Tisha Edwards, chief of staff for the Baltimore City Public Schools, the city's new teacher contract has "forever changed" its human capital strategies and allowed the schools to focus on teacher effectiveness in ways that were not possible before. Teacher evaluations now determine professional advancement, with a higher standard of teacher effectiveness required to move from

On April 25–26, 2012, the RSN hosted a seminar in Boston for its Teacher and Leader Effectiveness/Standards and Assessment Community of Practice. Tisha Edwards, chief of staff for the Baltimore City Public Schools, discussed the career pathways initiative during a panel held the second day of the convening.

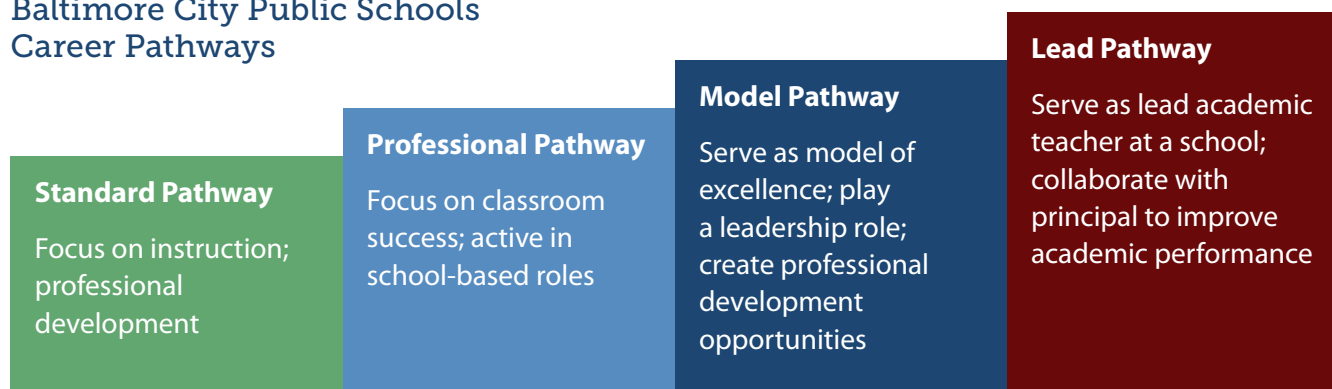
one career pathway to the next. Baltimore City will be negotiating a new teacher evaluation system to implement in 2013–2014, as the State now requires local educational agencies to develop systems that meet certain criteria.

As a result of the new contract, Baltimore City Public Schools has created four career pathways for teachers: Standard, Professional, Model and Lead. The Standard Pathway is for entry-level teachers or teachers with a bachelor's degree as their highest academic degree. The majority of Baltimore's approximately 5,000 teachers were placed in the second tier, the Professional Pathway, which requires a master's degree or its equivalent. Under the new system, teachers will be able to move to the Professional Pathway through peer review or by reaching the top level of the Standard Pathway. Baltimore has developed a peer review process for the Model Pathway and announced the first cohort in May 2012. Criteria for the Lead Pathway are expected to be complete by spring 2013.

Teachers progress within career pathways by earning "achievement units" that are based on annual evaluations, coursework and professional development. After accruing 12 achievement units,

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Baltimore City Public Schools Career Pathways



Source: <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/Page/14091>

a teacher moves up one interval and can do so more than once a year, if he or she earns enough units. Movement from one pathway to another, however, is determined by peer reviews that weigh instruction, leadership and continual learning that improves classroom practice and student growth.

Because Baltimore has only implemented selection criteria and a peer review process for one pathway to date, the Model Pathway, that pathway is the focus of this publication.

The Model Pathway

Teachers are central to the implementation of the Model Pathway—Baltimore teachers developed the definition of a “model teacher” and determined which of their peers would serve in the first Model Pathway cohort. A model teacher is defined as an exemplary educator or practitioner who goes beyond his or her normal job description to accelerate student achievement, take risks, influence the practice of colleagues, support stakeholders and display excellence and high standards in building professional capacity.

A model teacher performs additional duties that may include, but are not limited to:

- Mentors new educators
- Coaches struggling educators
- Serves on a professional peer review committee

- Develops and facilitates professional development for the school, community and local educational agency
- Opens his or her classroom or practice to colleagues
- Serves in a school leadership position
- Attends ongoing model educator training
- Collaborates to develop school-wide curriculum and assessments
- Supervises student teachers, practicum students and interns
- Keeps documentation to support his or her model profile

There is no limit on the number of teachers who can apply for and achieve placement on the Model Pathway. Movement through the career pathways system is not designed to be a competition, but rather a process that teachers choose to pursue. However, the standards are high.

To date, Baltimore teachers have had two opportunities to qualify for the Model Pathway. In fall 2011, 341 teachers applied to be part of the first cohort in the Model Pathway, and 100 were selected. Teachers with a minimum of 10 years of work experience in the city schools, a master’s degree, 30 hours of professional development credits and two evaluation ratings of “proficient” within the last three years, along with no unsatisfactory ratings, had the opportunity to be

“grandfathered” into the Model Pathway. More than 500 teachers entered the Model Pathway through the grandfather clause.

Becoming a Model Teacher

In Baltimore, model teachers who serve on professional peer review committees select fellow teachers for the Model Pathway. According to Tisha Edwards, this is a key aspect of the program—teachers, not central office staff, select model teachers. [View a brief video addressing this topic](#) 

From among the 500 “grandfathered” Model Pathway teachers, 100 were selected to serve on the professional peer review committees for the first cohort of teachers through a process managed by the BTU and the American Federation of Teachers. Insight Education partnered with Baltimore City Public Schools and BTU to provide three full days of instruction for each reviewer. The trainers taught model teachers to review artifacts and videos of teaching and to score submissions using the “model teacher rubric” established for this pathway. The peer review process took about three months.

Each professional peer review committee is composed of at least three teachers from the Baltimore City Public Schools who have certifications, job descriptions or professional experience similar to the candidates they will evaluate. At least one reviewer must be certified in the same content area. The pool of professional peer review committee members now includes teachers selected for the first cohort of model teachers, as well as those selected from the grandfathered Model Pathway teachers. [View a brief video addressing this topic](#) 

Applicants are required to submit a profile that includes videos of their teaching and samples of student work produced in their classrooms. The profiles are scored confidentially by a professional peer review committee according to the model teacher rubric. If a teacher scores 80 percent or higher, he or she is recommended for placement on the Model Pathway. The Joint Oversight Committee, composed of 50 percent management and 50 percent BTU, reviews the recommendations of the professional peer review

committees, as well as the evaluation rating of each applicant, before finalizing the selection.

The contract with BTU stipulates that teachers selected for the Model Pathway go through a review process to determine whether they will remain on the Model Pathway. Grandfathered teachers must be reviewed every three years, all others, every five years. However, this process has not yet been clearly defined.

Lessons Learned

Attentive Relationship with the Union. According to Tisha Edwards, one of the most important lessons learned from this process is that the city school system must be willing “to invest time in relationship building with the union.” She estimates that 40 percent of her time is spent building those relationships. Every two weeks, union and city school system leaders meet to negotiate policies and address major questions. The process of reaching agreement on the definition of a model teacher was lengthy, and only achieved because of those relationships, she believes.

Educator Engagement. Another critical component is teacher engagement throughout the entire process. Teachers helped develop the criteria for a model teacher and determine which teachers to place on the Model Pathway. According to Tisha Edwards, “If given the opportunity to lead and participate, teachers will step up to the plate. You get much more value that way.”

Central Office Systems of Support. Implementing career pathways in Baltimore means a systemic realignment of school system operations to the new way of thinking. Baltimore completely reorganized its support systems, retraining the human capital office and creating new financial and business systems. For example, the Office of Human Capital created a Career Pathway Service Center, which has two full-time employees who respond to pathway-related calls, emails and requests for information and assistance regarding achievement units. In addition, Baltimore City Public Schools has built a system that allows teachers and its professional development office to submit course completion documents so

the professional peer review committees can award achievement units directly to teachers. Employee self-service profile pages enable teachers to view their current status on pathways and intervals.

Clear and Consistent Communications. Baltimore also learned the importance of a communications strategy and the risk of misinformation undermining its efforts. By providing teachers and principals with accurate information about changes upfront and regularly throughout the process, Baltimore found that it could minimize rumor and misinformation while maximizing the message of new possibilities.

"Give teachers ownership, not buy-in. They are different things."

Tisha Edwards
Chief of Staff,
Baltimore City Public Schools

RESOURCES

Baltimore City Public Schools has developed a frequently asked questions document about the Model Pathway program:

<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/5174/ModelPathwayFAQ.pdf>

The Model Teacher Rubric used to score Model Pathway candidates can be found at:

<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/Page/14108>

Information about the 2010 contract with BTU can be found at:

<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/domain/5151>

http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/243/PDF/BTU20102013FinalTeacher_Agreement%5B1%5D.pdf

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